



Naval Medical Research and Development

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News Releases

DoD-VA Research Partnership to Improve Understanding of Active Duty and Veteran Health

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Naval Health Research Center



151010-N-GR120-207 U.S. 5TH FLEET AREA OF OPERATIONS (Oct. 10, 2015) A Sailor recovers a hold back bar after an F/A-18F Super Hornet launches from the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71). Theodore Roosevelt is deployed in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations supporting Operation Inherent Resolve, strike operations in Iraq and Syria as directed, maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts in the region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Anna Van Nuys/Released)

A new partnership between DoD and VA medical researchers achieves a milestone with its first joint publication, which examines post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in veteran and active duty populations. The study will be published in the Journal of Psychiatric Research, June 2017.

The new study, the first to compare PTSD symptom trajectories of current and former service members, was authored by researchers from the VA and the DoD's Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), a longitudinal study to evaluate the health of military personnel throughout their careers and after, launched in 2001 and led by the Naval Health Research Center.

"The Millennium Cohort Study is one of the largest sources of self-reported health information of

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current and former service members,” said Cmdr. Dennis Faix, director of the Millennium Cohort Study and preventive medicine physician. “Many DoD studies only examine current service members and many VA studies begin examining veterans after they have separated from the military. The Millennium Cohort Study is one of the few studies that straddle this line.”

In the joint study, DoD and VA researchers found similar PTSD symptom trajectories in active duty personnel and veterans, suggesting consistency in how both groups experience PTSD over time. Of the four trajectories found in both groups, the most common was the resilient trajectory with low PTSD symptom levels. Veterans, however, were less likely to be classified in the resilient category than those on active duty.

“The current study shows the course of PTSD is similar between separated and continuously serving active duty personnel, supporting the use of common treatment methods within the VA and DoD, which will facilitate the transition of patients from one system to the other,” said Faix.

Collaboration between the VA and DoD on health research that spans military service to separation from service is supported by the breadth of information collected on MCS surveys.

“The rich, longitudinal data that MCS researchers have been collecting since 2001 is incredibly valuable for both the DoD and VA,” said Faix. “Military service may affect the health of military personnel after they separate. Going forward, working with the VA will allow both agencies to make sure we are getting the best information to develop a comprehensive understanding of the continuum of health in current and former service members.”

The partnership between DoD and VA leverages MCS data to answer questions that impact the health and wellness of both active duty personnel and veterans. Going forward, DoD and VA researchers are developing plans to share study data across both agencies to execute future research efforts, whether the subjects are veterans or active military personnel.

As the DoD’s premier deployment health research center, NHRC’s cutting-edge research and development is used to optimize the operational health and readiness of the nation’s armed forces. In proximity to more than 95,000 active duty service members, world-class universities, and industry partners, NHRC sets the standard in joint ventures, innovation, and translational research.

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